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ABSTRACT

This publication, one in a series, is intended to bridge the information gap between what the research says and what actually transpires when various programs and reform initiatives are implemented in schools. This particular publication presents 30 questions to 5 participants of the Distinguished Principal Fellows program. The questions are framed around the larger questions: "What do principals need to know about instruction and learning, and what must they be able to do to transform their schools into high-performing learning communities?" Following are some of the specific questions asked of the principals: "How did you communicate the urgency for change and that school reform would be an ongoing and long-term effort?" "What support is required at the district level to facilitate reform at the school level?" "How do you implement school reform at the secondary level when most models are elementary based?" "How do you distribute leadership in the change process?" "How do you address the incongruence between state mandates, state and national standards, and some comprehensive school reform model requirements?" "What role must teachers play in whole school reform?" (WFA)

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Transforming Schools into High-Performing Learning Communities—Principals Speak Out.

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Summer 2003

LSS Laboratory for Student Success

Field Notes

Capturing Conversations of Procedural Knowledge

LSS *Field Notes* document experiences in context in education, capturing conversations of procedural knowledge.

The Laboratory for Student Success
The Mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Laboratory
at
Temple University
1301 Cecil B. Moore Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19122
Voice: 800-892-5550 Fax: 215-204-5130
E-mail: lss@temple.edu Website: www.temple.edu/lss

Transforming Schools Into High-Performing Learning Communities—Principals Speak Out

The Laboratory for Student Success (LSS), the Mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Laboratory, is pleased to introduce this first issue of *Field Notes*. Publications in this occasional series are intended to bridge the information gap between what the research says and what actually transpires when various programs and reform initiatives are implemented in schools.

All who work in the field of research—whether as researchers, superintendents, principals, teachers, or parents—realize there is certainly no shortage of ideas and programs. There is, however, little opportunity for those working the day-to-day, hands-on implementation of these concepts to talk about what happens in the classroom as reform moves from concept to implementation. This publication is meant to capture the voices from the field and to present an opportunity to learn from their experiences.

As standard-based reform has directed attention to schools as the unit of organizational accountability with the most influence on teaching and learning, principals have become the education leaders most responsible for managing learning conditions. The movement to reform and improve schools demands that principals be visionaries focused on improving teaching and learning to ensure their students' success; they must be leaders capable of promoting their vision throughout the school community and knowledgeable of the specific practices that will bring it to reality.

In 2000, LSS created The Distinguished Principal Fellows Program to honor visionary school leaders. These fellows, in collaboration with LSS, point the way toward successful school reform efforts. Their stories communicate the barriers and benefits encountered in moving schools forward as they become high-performing learning communities.

Five of the fellows were asked to respond to a number of questions framed around the larger issue of "What do principals need to know about instruction and learning, and what must they be able to do to transform their schools into high-performing learning communities?" Their reflections on their accomplishments provide insight for other principals in their struggles to promote change in their schools.

Each fellow brings a unique style of leadership and leader competencies to *Field Notes*. Each tells his or her unique story, reflecting the particular context of his or her school and district, but nevertheless representative of similar experiences from principals throughout the country. Each presents a thoughtful and insightful approach to interacting with the various stakeholders present in any educational community. Together they provide glimpses of their procedural knowledge that distinguishes their leadership from many of their contemporaries.

LSS research associates Patricia Felton-Montgomery and Frederick McCoy framed the questions for this dialogue and provided the expertise and energy to coordinate this project and support this issue of *Field Notes*. The Distinguished Principal Fellows were generous in sharing their time and wisdom, and we are grateful for their tenacity and insight.

JoAnn Manning
Executive Director
The Laboratory for Student Success

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Why did you begin your school reform effort?

HURLEY: We initiated school reform in the fall of 1999 as a result of low assessment test scores. We were mandated to initiate school reform by the state department of education because our assessment scores were severely below our anticipated scores. Of the approximately 1,200 schools in the state, the school's scores ranked the 69th lowest.

GOULD: When I first came to Watertown 3½ years ago, I began by working with students and teachers. While in classrooms, as a participant observer, and in my walks-around, I conducted informal audits of the different types of instruction used by the faculty. I found Watertown to have a diverse student body and the predominant form of instruction to be whole group. Random reviews of student work samples revealed student-learning outcomes to be inconsistent across grade levels. A review of tests administered in the past showed many students to be under-performing. About 25% were enrolled in special education programs.

WHITMIRE: A long history of low academic performance on standardized tests, limited parent involvement, pressure from the district and state to improve student achievement, and teacher frustration were indicators of the need to create a climate which supports, encourages, and results in enhancement and maximization of cognitive abilities. A reform approach focusing on adaptive learning, enhanced achievement opportunities for marginal students, and collaborative strategies to promote mutual accountability for student learning was required to get the job done.

FULLER: The movement toward school reform in the Cranberry School District began with a conversation between a group of teachers and the administration. Several members of the teaching staff attended the Pennsylvania Title I Schoolwide Programs conference. While there, they heard a presentation about the model that was eventually selected as the basis for our school reform efforts.

After returning from the conference, these teachers requested a meeting with the superintendent and the current building principals. They described the model and their perceived need for school reform. The teachers requested the opportunity to visit a school that was implementing this program. A group made a site visit and, upon their return, the decision was made to investigate sources of funding to enable the district to begin implementing the model.

Over the next year, we focused our efforts on receiving a Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) grant. After five revisions and three visits by Pennsylvania Department of Education representatives, our efforts were rewarded with a 3-year grant. After initial training, we began the process of implementing our school reform efforts.

SERENKA: We looked at the data from a struggling school that showed a plateau in test scores in both language arts and mathematics. Parent involvement was at an all-time low, and there were no external resources coming into the building. Teachers had not received any degree of intense staff development from an external partner in years. The ground was fertile for sowing the seeds of reform from the outset. The board was clamoring for increased student achievement and had no idea of how to suggest that it be accomplished. The superintendent understood the direction in which the school needed to move and asked that we try to establish a school community that would move in that direction.

How did you communicate the urgency for change and that school reform would be an ongoing and long-term effort?

HURLEY: This was evident when we received our test scores. We fell into the category of schools that had to develop a reform plan. The state-mandated timeline was to achieve a specified goal by the year 2014. Our goal was substantial enough to realize that it would be an ongoing and long-term effort. Our Academic Index was 39 on a scale of 1–140, and our goal is to have a score of 100.

GOULD: I began the first of a series of faculty meetings with the question, "What's driving you crazy?" After much discussion over the weeks, the faculty identified three major concerns: (a) the difficulty of meeting the diverse characteristics and learning needs of students, (b) the number of students who were not taking responsibility for their behavior and learning, and (c) the lack of parent involvement in helping students with homework. We talked about the enormity of the problem, that it would be difficult to make the necessary improvements, and that it would take a long-term effort to bring about the changes needed.

WHITMIRE: I am a proponent of site-based management. Upon arriving at Willow Hill in 1996, the cries for help were inherent in all facets of administrative/staff interactions. I presented a formula for instituting staff subcommittees. These groups would help interpret district curriculum, facilitate the planning and/or implementation of remedial and enrichment programs, encourage the creation of and experimentation with unique student life programs, and identify methods to improve parent and community awareness and involvement in school activities.

In the fall of 1998, despite a noticeable change in student behavior, a slight rise in standardized tests results, an emerging vibrancy of student life, and a more community-friendly, attractive physical environment, we were still dissatisfied. It was time to introduce the next step. I suggested

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the need for another committee—a small, open-minded, reform-oriented, diverse, voluntary faculty cluster (school reform committee). The idea for this committee was sparked by a school reform demonstration showcase I had attended the preceding spring. This team would meet regularly. Its goals were to (a) assess our needs, (b) research reform models, (c) garner support, (d) discuss with staff the most relevant options for reform, and (e) present a model and a process for initiating schoolwide restructuring, including a full staff critique and a vote for acceptance.

The entire restructuring process was predicated on faculty understanding the significance of each step and that reform is a process that adapts to the changing needs of all stakeholders. To facilitate this understanding, in-service time was devoted to learning the dynamics of change and recognizing its impact on the school community.

FULLER: Through the process of developing our CSRD project, we had many conversations about the need to reform our school communities. Teachers and parents who were involved in writing the grant proposals reviewed data on student achievement and assessed building and district needs. The information developed was shared with school community members throughout the process.

SERENKA: As the relationship developed between teachers and a new administrator at the beginning of the 1998 school year, it became apparent that instruction was excellent and that student achievement was not in line with the caliber of instruction. In various conversations, teachers were clamoring for a new structure aimed at student achievement. They were tired of getting heat from the board and tired of teaching themselves to death. Teachers were able to see that change was evident, and the staff was inclined toward making that change happen even more quickly. Change is difficult for many, but there were sufficient staff committed to a total reform effort. With a coordination of programs, and CSRD as the overarching framework, scores could increase.

Ron Hurley

While at Warren East Middle School, Ron Hurley has been instrumental in the implementation of school reform. Some of the initiatives started at Warren East Middle School include curriculum mapping, curriculum alignment to state standards, block scheduling, and looping.

As a result of the hard work and dedication of the administration, students, faculty, staff, parents, and the community in general, Warren East Middle School has become recognized as a leader in school reform. Visitors from across the state of Kentucky and the nation have visited the campus to observe instructional practices at the school. Ron has made presentations at both state and national conferences on various topics, which include scheduling, professional development, instructional practices, and assessment preparation.

WARREN EAST MIDDLE SCHOOL
Bowling Green, Kentucky
Total enrollment = 445
Classroom teachers = 35
Administrative/Supervisory = 3
Counselors, librarians, and other service coordinators = 8

Q How did you garner initial support from your staff and school community?

HURLEY: We began with an analysis of test scores and instructional practices in our school. We wanted to see if the state-mandated core content was being taught and if students understood it. This was possible because the state supplied a question-by-question breakdown by core content subject area along with individual student test scores.

After identifying strengths and weaknesses, we formulated a plan to address teaching and learning needs. Through this process, Warren East's staff recognized the need for change and developed the confidence in our plan to address instructional needs. With the ownership and support of regular education faculty, special education staff also accepted the plan, which was shared with the community through newsletters, parent–teacher organization meetings, and parent contacts.

GOULD: I mentioned that the concerns of staff and school community were universal and that I knew of two programs that were designed to help teachers address the three concerns that were identified. The teachers expressed interest in getting involved in the programs mentioned [i.e., the Responsive Classroom and Adaptive Learning Environments Model (ALEM), which are components of the Community for Learning (CFL) program]. Throughout the year, we talked about the components of a unified approach to addressing the behavior and learning issues of students.

I asked the staff to sign off on a CSRD grant for an the expanded version of ALEM, called Community for Learning (CFL). The following year, professional development money was used to hire a consultant to help teachers with the components of the Responsive Classroom during the opening day teacher workshop. The workshop was well received. To my surprise, we received the CSRD grant, and training for the 12 dimensions of CFL began in late fall/early winter. Parents were notified that we received the three-year grant and learned about CFL through newsletters written by the principal.

WHITMIRE: From the beginning, everyone was told that restructuring was the most logical resolution to our problems. I stressed that reform was a continuous process and the support of all stakeholders, as well as staff commitment to follow the steps and strategies inherent in the model, was vital to its success.

A specific subject was targeted for restructuring and staff members were trained in small cohorts. The advantages of the model's local proximity, financial support, research basis, successful track record, structured community outreach component, on-site technical support, opportunities for in-house collaboration, and visits to other schools were highlighted. The school reform committee kept staff apprised of its actions.

Results of the needs assessment were shared and the team met with faculty clusters to explain the restructuring process. I met with parents, community, staff, and the school board to explain the need for change and the rationale for selecting CFL. CFL administrators and trainers met with staff, union representatives, and district administrators in a series of open meetings before, during, and after school. After the program facilitator was selected from the staff, the superintendent publicly described the need for restructuring, endorsing the selection process and the chosen model. He attended information sessions and met with faculty and the teachers' union while collaborating with the school board to invoke their endorsement and financial support.

The comprehensive school reform program that served as the framework for each school's reform effort is Community for Learning (CFL). This program draws on over two decades of research on what makes schools work and what helps each student learn, even for those children who are faced with some of the most challenging circumstances. CFL builds on the strengths of diverse communities by redeploying existing resources and expertise to achieve the most positive impact on children's development and educational success. A centerpiece of the CFL program is an integrated design that establishes a collaborative process of finding ways to sustain high standards of academic achievement for each student. This is achieved by linking schools with the resources, expertise, and energies of other learning environments, including homes, churches, libraries, the workplace, higher education institutions, community organizations, and social service agencies—in short, a community for learning.

FULLER: Initial staff support was garnered through formal and informal discussions with teachers. Teachers from the group that originally learned of our chosen model were instrumental in these discussions. Groups of teachers were taken on site visits to see our chosen model being implemented in several different school districts, while those teachers who did not make a site visit were given the opportunity to view a video showing the model being used with students. As we worked through the process of developing our CSRD grant proposal, we included any teacher who was willing to help in the writing. By the end of our fifth revision, more than half of the elementary teaching staff had participated.

SERENKA: The first steps in garnering support included disseminating formal and informal needs assessment questionnaires and gathering hard and soft data. Failure of the present academic framework had to be proven and areas of concern needed to be identified. Reform became a slow movement that needed to pick up steam. Time was not on our side, so I needed to keep pushing.

Q If you had to do it again, how would you alter how you began your efforts at school reform?

HURLEY: If we were starting over, I would work sooner and harder to inform parents and develop their support, as well as the community's support. I have discovered that one of the most important components of school reform is patience.

GOULD: Teachers were enthusiastic about changes regarding student (and parent) behavior and learning. Unfortunately, there was not a deep enough understanding of the extent to which teaching practices would need to change. Perhaps, if the teachers had a greater understanding of CFL before they began adoption, implementation might have gone more smoothly. On the other hand, if teachers had fully understood CFL and its implications for instructional practice, they may not have adopted CFL at all.

WHITMIRE: My primary focus would be learning and teaching about change. I would devote more time to preparing staff to understand the dynamics of, the need for, and the impact of change. I would have the staff complete and discuss a simple, preliminary needs assessment. The results would be the basis for teaching the relationship between restructuring and change.

FULLER: I believe that a firmly established acknowledgment of need and desire for change within the school community is of utmost importance. If we were to begin our reform efforts again, we would certainly take more time to build support for our efforts in the school community. The school community would be encouraged to study the available models of school reform and reach consensus on the best plan for our district. This consensus building would include teachers, administrators, parents, and board members

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working together as a team to review models, the research base, facts, and figures. A plan to implement school reform in the district would then be developed. Once a plan has been developed, all members of the school community would be involved in its implementation through training and awareness sessions. Teachers would receive training and support to meet their needs in implementing the selected program and all members of the community would be kept informed of our reform efforts as we progressed through implementation.

SERENKA: I would be more careful and less urgent about the whole movement. A readiness for change, in general, is required. I would be more receptive to what teachers need in terms of philosophical instruction on the processes of change, and I would try to conduct more information development for the community at large and more professional development for teachers. Faculty members need to support CSRD and to try to make it fit into their particular style. Students must understand the need for increased student achievement. Community support is easier in the name of sound educational decision making. In light of the urgency, a subtle and steady push for forward movement can be viewed in a positive light, but it is always best to have more time to prepare the school community.

> "CSR is an all-embracing change in the way we think about and do things in education. It is the use of data to develop new ways of doing things in schools that enable students, teachers, and parents to be more successful in reaching high levels of expectation and achievement."
>
> — ***Jeffrey Fuller***

Q. How do you define "comprehensive school reform"?

HURLEY: According to the National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform, CSR is:

- A systematic approach to schoolwide improvement that incorporates every aspect of the school management.
- A program and a process that is designed to enable all students to meet challenging academic content and performance goals.
- A framework for using research to move from multiple, fragmented educational programs to a unified plan with a single focus of academic achievement.
- A product of the long-term, collaborative efforts of school staff, parents, and district staff.

Although I certainly agree to these four components I would add two additional components.

- A universally recognized need to develop a different educational program than the one that is currently being used.
- A commitment to fully implement the "new" program schoolwide with the patience to allow change to take place as naturally as possible.

GOULD: CSR is a large scale, systemic approach to improving student learning.

WHITMIRE: CSR is a process for change that results in complete restructuring of a school. This kind of reform is not limited to altering curriculum, materials, or instructional practices. It may require renovating, recharging, readjusting, and removing people, ideas, attitudes, and things. It requires tenacious, goal-driven, action-oriented attitudes and steadfast beliefs that what needs to be accomplished is worth the time, energy, financial expenditure, and the endurance of the criticism and skepticism of colleagues. However, when reform is successful it's because as the believers advance, they continually seek ways to persuade others to come along for the ride and eventually enjoy the fruits of their labors.

FULLER: CSR is an all-embracing change in the way we think about and do things in education. It is the use of data to develop new ways of doing things in schools that enable students, teachers, and parents to be more successful in reaching high levels of expectation and achievement.

SERENKA: CSR is creating an academic and social culture that can increase student achievement and sustain academic excellence over time. It is an overarching district framework that permeates informed decision making at all levels. It is the function that allows lifelong learning to become the hallmark for providing society with excellence in education. CSR requires continuous reflection and restructuring to accommodate what the community needs at any given time, pulling all strings together in a pattern to increase student achievement for all.

Q. How did you choose the reform model being used in your school/district?

HURLEY: In order to choose a reform model, our school divided into five teams of five teachers. Each team reviewed a list of reform models supplied by the state department of education and made a presentation to the entire faculty on

their choice. The faculty reviewed the models, asked questions, and then voted for the model they felt would be successful at our school.

In our decision making, we specifically focused on student engagement in hands-on activities and whether the model could be applied to all subject areas. We felt the need to involve school reform across the curriculum.

GOULD: I reviewed a number of models available through CSRD funding. Upon careful review, I determined that CFL would best meet the needs of our school community. I presented the model to the faculty, connected the 12 dimensions of the model to our school goals, and asked the faculty if they thought that the model addressed our teaching and learning needs. The faculty agreed that it did and decided to adopt the model.

WHITMIRE: The school reform committee, a voluntary group of classroom teachers and specialists, identified essential components of a potentially effective school reform program that would meet the needs of our school and also comply with district guidelines. These included: (a) maintaining the current curriculum; (b) continuous opportunities for complimentary, needs-based professional education; (c) easy access to program coordinators and auxiliary personnel; (d) no critical staff changes; (e) no major expenditures; and (f) programs that offered specific guidelines for enhancing parent involvement and community outreach.

All models were reviewed from this prospective and four possible models were selected. Committee members watched tapes and read literature for each and paired to present information about each model to all staff at a faculty meeting. Afterwards, faculty decided which model best fit the identified criteria. CFL was selected and program representatives visited the school to present information to staff and central office personnel. Staff voted to either participate in the program, transfer to another building, or to request more information. Ninety-eight percent agreed to participate in the CFL program.

FULLER: We chose CFL because of its emphasis on sound, research-based instructional processes and on the involvement of the community. We were also looking for a model that provided easily accessible, quality technical support. We became familiar with the model when a group of teachers from the district attended the Pennsylvania Title I Schoolwide Programs Conference. They attended a presentation about the model and decided to further explore the possibilities of implementing CFL in the district. Upon returning from the conference, the teachers requested a meeting with the administration. It was decided that a group of teachers and administrators would visit a district that was implementing the model. After this visit, we began the search for funding that would enable us to begin the training process and implement the program.

SERENKA: Choosing a model is important; it must be appropriate for the particular building. Formal and informal needs assessments must be conducted to find out exactly what the school community members need and value. Seniority of teaching staff, student achievement data in various areas, demographics, cultural information, and other forms of hard and soft data are needed to match the school with the proper model.

Q **What is your philosophy of change and how relevant was it to your selection of a reform model? How relevant is it to your ongoing reform efforts?**

HURLEY: Before change can take place, I think it is paramount that all involved recognize a need for change and believe that positive change is possible. Our faculty came to

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Jeffrey Fuller

Jeffrey Fuller began his teaching career in the Portsmouth Public School System in southeastern Virginia. He taught sixth grade in a variety of settings, including an elementary school, a junior high school, and a magnet program for science and technology in a middle-school setting. In 1994, Fuller moved to the Chesapeake City Public Schools and taught sixth grade at Crestwood Middle School. He was chair of the School Business Partner Committee, organizing a very successful tutoring program that served over 100 middle-school students and utilized more than 20 volunteers. He was also a member of the School Safety Committee of the district-wide School Improvement Committee for the Chesapeake City Public Schools.

With his family, Fuller moved back to western Pennsylvania in 1998 to accept an elementary principalship in the Cranberry School District. He is currently the principal of the district's five elementary schools. While in Cranberry, Fuller has been extensively involved in grant-writing activities, having received over $900,000 in funding for several major initiatives.

PINOAK PRIMARY CENTER AND STEFFEE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Senecca, Pennsylvania
Total enrollment = 136 and 83
Classroom teachers = 7 and 4
Administrative/Supervisory = 1 and 1
Counselors, librarians, and other service coordinators = 1 and 1

realize the need for change through faculty meetings and discussions in team meetings. When the need is recognized and the belief is present, a program for change can then be developed. The plan must incorporate the strengths of the school and allow time for the planned changes to take place. Celebration of successes, support, patience, and ongoing professional development are keys to successfully implementing change; they make it possible to sustain CSR. By using this philosophy, our school has implemented change successfully and continues to evolve and improve instruction.

GOULD: Change requires the efforts of all members of the school community. All stakeholders must be involved in the decision-making process. An important role of the principal is to work with others to determine student needs and develop solutions to problems that are affecting a significant number of students. Developing an action plan to address teaching and learning needs must be a joint effort involving teachers, parents, and the principal. Involving all the stakeholders is an ongoing process.

WHITMIRE: I believe change is a natural, continuous process and vital to the healthy development of any organization. Astute individuals are in a constant state of self-assessment. They are progressively proactive, always seeking opportunities for self-improvement and new growth. This embracing of change is manifested through the organizations they manage. Nothing is permanently fixed. Adaptations are required to keep the organization current, competitive, and strong. I was attracted to CFL because it provides opportunity for continuous assessment and organizational improvement.

FULLER: I believe that change is a good and necessary part of education that needs to be supported and developed over time. Change does not take place quickly in education. Educators need to be given time to try new methods and implement new programs so they will have an opportunity to become familiar and comfortable with these processes, bringing about positive student results. This need for time must be acknowledged throughout our reform efforts as we expand the implementation of the model and move into new curricular areas.

The level of easily accessible support provided by CFL was a key factor to its selection for implementation in the Cranberry School District. We knew that CFL would be available as needed to support our staff and administration in the implementation of the model.

SERENKA: Change is a constant force that must be accepted and celebrated. Education must be able to accommodate that constant change. In celebrating change, it must be stated that change in education really only means using already known and practiced methods in a new way. Pedagogy is finite in its number of methods but not in the variety of ways that these methods can be grouped to become what we call best practice. Identifying the simple twists in already known methods makes it easier for teachers to accept change. If the goal of reform is to be the best you can be, then changing to fit the needs of a school community is a major component to ongoing reform.

Patricia Whitmire

During Patricia Whitmire's tenure as principal of Willow Hill Elementary School, the school's standardized test scores have risen and remain well above the state average. For the last three years, teams of intermediate students have scored within the top 10% of all participants in the International Elementary Math Olympiad competition. The building curriculum specialist was named National Teacher of the Year in Science and Mathematics. Additionally, in 2001, Willow Hill was cited by the Education Trust as one of 2,305 elementary schools of 89,599 with a student population at least 50% African American and Latino for exceptional performance.

Whitmire was awarded the Education Advocacy Award by the Montgomery Council Advisory Board of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission along with certificates of recognition from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania House of Representatives and Senate and a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition from the U.S. government. She believes that although students may not enter school prepared, they come anxious to learn. When standards are consistently and progressively high, the quality of academic activity exciting and differentiated, and the adult community understands and supports expectations for academic excellence, students will prosper.

Willow Hill Elementary School
Abington, Pennsylvania
Total enrollment = 389
Classroom teachers = 19
Administrative/Supervisory = 1
Counselors, librarians, and other service coordinators = 2

Q What is the "readiness" component for school reform and how did you negotiate readiness for change with staff and your school community?

HURLEY: To me "readiness" is recognizing the need for CSR and the willingness to work as hard as necessary to implement positive school reform in your building. Our need

for reform was evident after receiving our test scores and being identified as the 69th lowest scoring school in the state out of approximately 1,200 schools.

The key factors in reform acceptance were involvement of all stakeholders throughout the selection, implementation, and review processes. Facts were presented and discussed and decisions were made as a group. This helped develop trust in the administration because those involved felt as though they were formulating the ideas and making the decisions. Providing support, training, and patience to allow school reform to be successful are keys to acceptance and continuing success. Once established, these components ensure the longevity of the reform effort and the ability to revise the plan when necessary.

GOULD: Once we identified our learning and teaching needs, the faculty was ready to begin the school improvement process. We began by providing training in the 12 dimensions of the CFL model. It was not long before the faculty became somewhat overwhelmed and implementation pacing was then adjusted to their level of readiness. Adjusting the number of components to be learned, as well as the pacing of implementation, has been an ongoing process based on faculty feedback.

WHITMIRE: Readiness occurs when individuals more openly question the effectiveness of current practices and demonstrate through behaviors—negative or positive, overt or covert—that they are ready to explore new options. With low test scores, a high poverty index, a high minority presence, a large number of special education classes, and a high record of inappropriate student behaviors, my building was ripe for change. As the social climate improved and test scores climbed, the staff became more confident that our students were capable of higher achievement. This made it possible to initiate the school climate committee, a small, steady group of risk takers who believe in our students and felt secure enough to explore remedies that could result in improvement.

FULLER: To successfully implement change, there must be a recognition and acceptance that change is necessary, possible, and positive. All members of the school community—administration, teachers, and parents—must understand the need for change in the way the school operates. All need to be involved in the process, from the initial steps of recognizing the need through the selection and implementation of school reform.

This is a difficult area for our district. We worked very hard to include as many members of the teaching staff and community in the development of our reform project. By the end of writing the grant, well over half of the staff had contributed to writing it, and all participated in conversations about its implementation. However, by the time we started training and implementing the model, we were experiencing difficulty with staff accepting the need for change. Most of those who initially brought the model to our attention denied any participation, and those who were implementing claimed to be doing so under duress. Because of this, we have been through significant legal and contractual discussions, including the filing of grievances, discussion sessions, arbitration, and negotiations regarding the implementation of CFL. While this process has been difficult and frustrating, the results we are beginning to see make the whole experience worthwhile. Students are more successful, standardized test scores are increasing, and the level of parental participation is on the rise.

> "I believe change is a natural, continuous process. Change is vital to the healthy development of any organism or organization. Astute individuals are in a constant state of self-assessment. They are progressively proactive, always seeking opportunities for self-improvement and new growth. This embracing of change is manifested through the organizations they manage. Nothing is permanently fixed. Adaptations are required to keep the organization current, competitive, and strong. I was attracted to CFL because it provides opportunity for continuous assessment and organizational improvement."
>
> — ***Pat Whitmire***

SERENKA: Readiness is a realization that things can be done better. Readiness for reform is achieved through ongoing and unlimited conversations with all facets of the school community. The conversation must allow people to see possibilities, set goals, and make promises. The result will be an appropriate pace and beginning for reform. Reform is a moving, growing philosophy that will happen, at first, with the critical few, quickly moving outward as celebrations of excellence and achievement take place.

Q How do you implement comprehensive school reform at the secondary level, when most models are elementary-based?

HURLEY: CSR implementation at the secondary school level has the same beginning as any school reform. It must begin

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with recognizing the need and developing and believing in the plan. The more difficult part for secondary schools is developing the plan/method to reform. While it is true most reform models are research based in elementary schools, I believe the theory in most cases can be adapted to secondary schools because you are still delivering core content. The variable that must be altered is the method to best meet changing age characteristics of students. Using the strengths of a school and community to form the basis for developing a plan, and selecting a reform model, are keys to acceptance and success. Finding the "best fit" is a good way to maximize the chance of success.

GOULD: I have been working closely with the high-school principal to determine what components of the CSR program would be most easily adapted to the secondary level and most easily accepted and implemented by the high-school faculty members.

FULLER: The process of reform takes shape in the same manner at both the elementary and secondary levels, with the recognition of the need for change and the acceptance that change, though difficult, can be positive. Actually implementing change at the secondary level takes on a very different look, however. Professional education activities have to be structured to meet the needs of subject area teachers. Practices that are more "elementary" in nature have to be adapted to the secondary setting. Because of the inherent rigidity at the secondary level, the implementation of any school reform initiative needs to be given even more time and intensive support than one implemented at the elementary school level. Structures have to be developed to support greater involvement of the community in the secondary school.

SERENKA: It is not so important that the models are elementary-based but that the integral components are identified and adjusted for the secondary level. Reform allows students to be engaged learners. It allows parents to understand their importence in the teaching/learning community. It makes the community listen to what is going on in education and helps students know that academic excellence is an expectation for all, not just a goal for some.

Q Is your reform effort school- or district-based? If district-based, how did you begin?

HURLEY: Our reform effort is school-based with district support.

GOULD: My school's adoption of the CFL reform model was a building-based decision involving faculty members. However, the adoption of CFL as a district model was a top-down decision initiated by the central office.

WHITMIRE: The model at Willow Hill is school-based.

"Developing an action plan to address teaching and learning needs must be a joint effort involving teachers, parents, and the principal. Involving all the stakeholders is an ongoing process."

— ***Stephen Gould***

FULLER: We make a conscientious effort to maintain a level of consistency across the district, in terms of curricular and programmatic implementation, because all of our students will eventually end up in the same school when they reach the sixth grade. This districtwide consistency also enables us to provide more consistent staff support and interaction throughout the change process. Because of this desire for curricular and program consistency across the district, our reform efforts are district-based.

We began implementing the school reform model across the district in our five elementary schools. Training was conducted for grade-level groups of teachers, with professional staff from all of the district buildings being trained at the same time. After a year of implementation at the elementary level, the board of school directors decided to accept an offer from the program provider to implement the model at the secondary level, as well. We are now implementing our reform model in all subject areas and at all grades levels.

SERENKA: The reform efforts in Woodland Hills are district-based in a slow infusion from the elementary level. Reform, in a loose manner, has been a topic of conversation in Woodland Hills for many years. A much more comprehensive reform effort will become established over the next three years, and grant money has been garnered for the effort. The new superintendent of the district has promised the board of schools directors that he will be able to move the district forward in overall student achievement.

What support is required at the district level to facilitate reform at the school level?

HURLEY: Support is required in the areas of curriculum, state standards, financial support, and professional development. District persons must make visits to the school and be a part of the reform effort. Being a liaison between all partners involved in reform helps insure no wasted effort, full use of resources, and effective use of time.

GOULD: The reform model adopted was selected because it met both building and district goals. The central office needs to constantly communicate the goals of the district and support the implementation efforts of the faculty through staff development and the hiring of building-based, full-time implementation specialists.

WHITMIRE: Our reform model requires support from the district Local Education Authorities (LEA), superintendent, and school board. An LEA is a central office administrator whose responsibilities include the following: (a) generating financial support—from the superintendent and school board—to allocate time and resources for staff to participate in program planning and curriculum development, (b) providing substitute coverage for weekly staff collaboration meetings, (c) pursuing board approval for program implementation plans, (d) regularly reviewing program issues with the principal, (e) keeping the superintendent and school board aware of school/community activities, and (f) ensuring district commitment to sustain the reform model after program funding resources are exhausted.

FULLER: To effectively implement reform at the school level, there is a great deal of district-level support required. Building-level administrators have to have the backing of district-level staff in order to plan and secure appropriate professional education, fund the activities necessary to implement the program, and build consensus for the need for improvement. It is also very important that all staff members know that there is a district-level expectation that the reform process will be implemented well, and that student achievement will improve.

SERENKA: District-level support must come in the form of encouragement to the school community as well as support in terms of allowing schools the time to engage in the continuous reflection required to commit to the reform effort. The Learning Walk strategy has been utilized in Woodland Hills and allows teachers to see central office personnel and visitors that are interested and excited about what is going on in the schools. Within the school, the administrative team needs to support teacher creativity. Administrators must be able to support a teaching staff who are relinquishing teaching methods that have been used for years in order to implement methods that are not as familiar.

Stephen Gould

Stephen Gould has been a principal for 20 years. The focus of his leadership work has been to build capacity of others to develop and implement solutions to problems that are affecting the learning of a significant number of children. Major areas of concentration have included working with site-based collaborative teams to differentiate instruction, create a school culture in which students take more responsibility for their behavior and learning, coordinate regular and special education services, and engage parents and the entire school community in the instructional focus of the school.

Stephen Gould is Professional Development Committee Chairperson for the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals' Association and a frequent organizational development workshop presenter and college coursework teacher. In an earlier life, Stephen wrote music for films and television. As principal, he continues to write music for children and peforms with them on a regular basis in his school.

Lowell Elementary School
Watertown, Massachusetts
Total enrollment = 350
Classroom teachers = 19
Administrative/Supervisory = 1
Counselors, librarians, and other service coordinators = 3

What specific strategies/approaches have been most successful for you in facilitating change?

HURLEY: We have been successful in facilitating change for several reasons. First, and most important, was making the need for change clear to everyone. Test scores were in the bottom 20% of the state and instruction and academic procedures had been delivered in the same manner for several years. Once the need to change was realized, we started the process of involving all faculty, staff, and the community in the planning and implementation process. All decisions were made from a majority vote of all involved.

The next strategy was to make sure plans were put in place and actually implemented with periodic reviews to provide any needed assistance, or to see if adjustments were needed. In sum, the change was facilitated because we recognized that change was needed. We then developed a plan based on our needs and put the plan in place with periodic adjustments, ensuring successful implementation.

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WHITMIRE: I believe that facilitating change is an arduous process. The change agent faces numerous challenges while generating support for change. I made frequent visits to classrooms to observe staff implementation of required components of the reform model. I took notes and made specific recommendations to improve implementation. I met with teachers in their classrooms to show why my comments were made.

After this initial step, I established peer coaching, providing time for staff to observe colleagues. This was followed by a network session between the coach and the observer. I'm finding that the key to successful peer coaching is to find something for everyone to showcase. For example, one teacher may have an effective physical classroom arrangement while another may have a unique way to raise the level of student concern. After determining the problems, I planned professional education programs. I think professional education should arise from identified needs.

FULLER: Different strategies work differently for individual staff members. For many teachers, the concept of change came easily; for others, it took a bit more time and effort. The strategy that has proven to be the most successful is the implementation of a system of networking among teachers and administrators who are implementing school reform. The opportunity for teachers and administrators to interact with other professionals, who are experiencing the same types of activities and trying to figure out how to make the model work in their schools and classes, is invaluable.

Teachers also have to be given adequate time to try various methods and techniques they are being asked to implement. Public education didn't get into the condition it is today simply overnight. We can't expect teachers and administrators to completely turn it around overnight, either. The change process is difficult; however, given time, we can have an impact for the better.

Fran Serenka

Fran Serenka is celebrating 22 years in education. She is currently the building principal of the Middle Level Learning Center at West in the Woodland Hills School District in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Fran was formerly principal at Barrett Elementary School in the Steel Valley School District, and a principal for the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Her teaching experience places her in classrooms in Northern New Jersey, New York City, and in the Pittsburgh area. In the fall of 2000, Fran became an Education Policy Leadership Fellow in Harrisburg.

Early in her career, Fran became interested in the question of education equity throughout the United States. Drawing on her background from teaching diverse urban populations, she feels that education, in general, needs to be more enriching for all students. Through a variety of initiatives and grants, Fran has made strides toward helping the students she works with, and many others, achieve that goal.

WOODLAND HILLS JHS WEST
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Total enrollment = 841
Classroom teachers = 55
Administrative/Supervisory = 4
Counselors, librarians, and other service coordinators = 10

SERENKA: Listening to all persons in the school community is critical to facilitating change in a positive manner. It is important to know what people are thinking and where their hearts and priorities lie. It is like doing an ongoing, informal needs assessment. Additionally, trying to define what is excellent about the existing structures and supporting those is important. People need to know that what they have done for years has validity. Incorporating old structures with the new ones makes it comfortable for everyone.

Q As the staff realized the level of work required for meaningful reform, how were you able to sustain the reform effort/ their commitment to educational reform?

HURLEY: We were able to sustain reform because teachers recognized the need to change. They made the commitment to implement change in order to benefit our students and make the children's experience at our school as successful as possible. The biggest aid was to recognize the positive changes and successes when they occurred. We celebrated successes and shared the keys to how success was achieved. I also feel ongoing monitoring and support of the reform effort at the administrative level is critical.

GOULD: Reviewing test data and examples of student work to determine student needs has sustained us through the difficult times. We chose education for our life's work because we wanted to improve student learning: this is our charge. When teachers and administrators see that they are making improvements, or when they see that problems are occurring, they are motivated to keep on doing what was successful or try something else.

WHITMIRE: This is a continuous struggle. My strategy is to keep the need for reform at the forefront of all we do in the school. I continually distribute literature that shows the universal need and rationale for school restructuring.

Discussions about restructuring became an integral component of staff interactions during collaborative meetings. I highlight individual, team, and building success stories at faculty meetings and in my weekly bulletin. I also send staff to visit other sites that are effectively implementing change.

In addition, I meet with staff individually and in small groups to find out what they need to cope with the demands of reform and to manage the components of the reform model. Then, I must find a way to get them what they need.

FULLER: What is monitored is what gets done. Setting individual or grade-level team implementation goals based on the model, developing indicators of success, and linking implementation to the evaluation process have all helped to move my school forward. It is easy to lose focus when one group or another is always proposing new initiatives. I have found that constantly communicating the goals of the school to students, faculty, and parents is a useful and necessary approach to keeping people focused.

SERENKA: When you enjoy doing hard work, it doesn't seem difficult. Work that has been given authorship by the faculty is ownership at its very best. Like business owners, when teachers and staff conceive the ideas themselves, they create and work hard because it is theirs. That is why faculty/staff buy-in to reform is so critical to overall success.

> "The ground was fertile for sowing the seeds of reform from the outset. The board was clamoring for increased student achievement and had no idea of how to suggest that it be accomplished. The superintendent understood the direction in which the school needed to move and asked that we try to establish a school community that would move in that direction."
>
> — ***Fran Serenka***

Q How did you get the staff and your community to understand and accept that educational reform may reveal deficiencies that could require significant adjustments in instructional strategies, school culture, teacher competence, student–teacher relations, etc.?

HURLEY: Recognizing the need for adjustments to strategies, culture, and teacher competence was automatic when the state testing cycle identified our school as not meeting set goals on the testing program. Staff knew that things were going to have to change. It was difficult to make teachers realize that no one was saying that they weren't working hard or were bad teachers. This was accomplished through ongoing professional development in teaching strategies and best practices.

By providing support and getting positive feedback—from test scores, parents, and students—the teachers were uplifted and the likelihood of accomplishing our goals was high. We continued to work toward meeting the state standards and creating the focus to meet state guidelines.

GOULD: We have used test data and student work to make a case for increasing the instructional repertoire of teachers.

WHITMIRE: This remains a work in progress. It's critical that the administrative change agent really understand the psychological and sociological impacts of change. Because the individual who is leading the way toward change is committed to the desired outcome, she may fail to understand that experienced staffers are afraid of having their deficiencies exposed and being scrutinized by parents. New teachers fear their inexperience will be highlighted and prevent them from becoming permanent teachers.

My strategy is to directly confront these issues by explaining that change requires certain risks. I assure them that strategies are in place to support their efforts to implement change and encourage conversations between staff from my school and staff elsewhere engaged in change.

FULLER: Again, those teachers who were able to internalize the need for school reform were able to view this information objectively and use it as a catalyst to drive their instructional and reform efforts. Community members and parents have, for the most part, been very supportive of our reform efforts. They see anything that makes a positive impact on the schools and student learning as a positive change. Even though the change process is difficult for parents, if they can see a positive outcome from their efforts they will be supportive.

To build public support for our efforts, we held a series of meetings in the schools to explain the program to the parents and interested community members. We also invited the local newspaper to publish a series of articles outlining our school reform efforts. These activities proved to be quite successful in building parent and community support.

SERENKA: The idea that deficiencies are simply areas that need support and commitment for change makes it easier to get the staff and community to understand and accept the information. High expectations are important to bringing people to the realization that someone always has a better idea or way of doing things. These better ways—some which

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may help us to reinvent our own methodologies—will help make a stronger academic environment. Teachers learn every day from students, parents, the community, administrators, and each other. We all need to set up a teaching/learning community that celebrates new ideas and things that work.

Q How did you work with your staff to determine the issues facing your school community relevant to educational reform? How did you set priorities and proceed to address them?

HURLEY: Educational reform was a schoolwide effort from the beginning. We formed schoolwide committees through our school site-based, decision-making council. We looked at curriculum, school climate, desegregation of test data, and classroom management, as well as any factor we found to impact student learning. We surveyed students, teachers, and parents to get ideas of what needed attention in the school community. Once we had a list to work from, we met to prioritize items.

Working with a state document called Standards and Indicators of School Improvement, we developed a schoolwide plan to address each need. This was then incorporated into the yearly school plan, the "consolidated school plan." This is a comprehensive plan that includes goals/objectives, funding sources, and the identification of the person responsible for goal implementation.

GOULD: Based on test data and a review of student work samples, we first determined what students needed to know and be able to do. The next step was to set priorities and develop a 5-year action plan that assigned responsibilities and timelines.

WHITMIRE: An in-service day was planned to explain and discuss the impact of change. A needs survey was distributed by the school reform committee, focusing on teacher attitudes and beliefs about student performance, quality of the curriculum, overall school climate, parent involvement, and community perception. Priorities were actually determined by the selected reform model, CFL.

Analysis of the results of the newly mandated state assessment, district testing, kindergarten readiness assessments, and Title I showed our students to have significant weakness in reading and language arts. Additionally, a newly mandated state requirement for all students to be able to read proficiently by the third grade clarified the targeted goal. Procedures and time lines were influenced by strategies outlined in the CFL model and any adaptations required to implement it.

FULLER: In developing and writing our CSR grant package, we met regularly and frequently with teachers and parents to establish our needs. In these meetings, we sought to develop goals for our reform efforts, goals that were based on the differences between each of our several school communities.

Once our implementation was started, we established learning teams at the building and district levels. These teams are composed of teachers, administrators, and parents and meet regularly to review program implementation, goals, and develop activities that will support the staff, students, and parents in their efforts.

SERENKA: Almost all issues can be relevant to educational reform. We began by looking at issues that would help increase student achievement. Changing the school culture to one that holds education as a priority was a key goal. This is a monumental task and involves getting into the heart of the community, literally preaching the message of reform. We decided that if we could get people to look seriously at school and its benefits in general, we could make a positive impact on attendance, discipline, and referrals. We also felt that if we could work to get all students engaged in their learning, they would want to come to school and learn. We have made progress, but there is much more work to do.

Secondly, we thought that researching models to increase overall literacy would be good for the whole school community. Finding ways and resources to support literacy and better writing skills is a kindergarten through twelfth grade endeavor for the district.

Priorities for reform tend to set themselves. In the beginning, those areas seem to be very obvious, immediately making it to the top of the reform list. As you move farther into reform, setting priorities becomes more deliberate.

What is "Comprehensive School Reform?"

- A systematic approach to school-wide improvement that incorporates every aspect of school management.
- A program and a process that is designed to enable all students to meet challenging academic content and performance goals.
- A framework for using research to move from multiple, fragmented educational programs to a unified plan with a single focus of academic achievement.
- A product of the long-term, collaborative efforts of school staff, parents, and district staff.

source: National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform

Q What structures (e.g., time, school organization, schedules) did you, your staff, and community put in place to support reform?

HURLEY: CSR requires major changes in all facets of school life in order to be successful. In addition to the obvious changes to areas such as curriculum, instruction, professional development, and budget allocation, reform affects things such as the length of class periods, grouping, and lunch periods. Each major change carries with it numerous changes within a single area.

However, some key structures were put in place to support Warren East's reform: (a) adopting a reform model to provide focus to our efforts, (b) changing to block scheduling to better facilitate the school reform model, (c) developing curriculum maps to focus teachers and students on necessary subject content, (d) participating in professional development to better understand what we are doing and the best way to go about making sure we continue to do it, and (e) having a school/community relations team to help parents and the community better understand our efforts.

GOULD: The faculty was organized into grade-level teams consisting of classroom teachers and support personnel. We examined scheduling and revised it so that grade-level teams of teachers and support personnel had more opportunities for common planning time, to develop lesson plans with multilevel activities linked to specific priority objectives.

"I am tight about what needs to be done, but loose regarding how people go about achieving their goals."

— ***Stephen Gould***

WHITMIRE: First, the district had to commit to hire a full-time teacher to facilitate the program. Later, CSRD funds were used to hire a part-time secretary and a home learning coordinator. The second, yet highly imperative, modification was to find time and space for staff to meet in small clusters to discuss their successes, frustrations, questions, and ideas pertinent to implementing reform. I thought it was extremely important for grade-level teams to include special education teachers, reading consultants, Title I, and itinerant staff. It also made sense to design a work area where teachers could prepare and store special materials (e.g., learning centers and prescription sheets) required by the reform model.

As the program expanded, space was required to house the home learning coordinator as well as a location for parent education and relevant materials. With a little creativity and support—from the district facilities staff, the superintendent, and school board—hallways became work areas, the faculty dining room was condensed, and a former audio-visual storage space became a copy room. Simultaneously, the scheduling team created time for small clusters of staff to meet weekly and for the community outreach committee to hold monthly planning sessions. The friendly, informal spirit in which these tasks were addressed and problems resolved confirmed my belief that when people commit to making good things happen, they will.

FULLER: We were very limited in the amount of structural changes we could make in the district, due to contractual issues. We could not impact the teaching schedule at either the elementary or secondary level without facing significant labor-relations issues. The structures that we were able to put in place were site-based teams in each of our schools and a district leadership team that functions at the district level by bringing together representatives from each school building and the administration on a regular basis.

The site-based team is responsible for establishing building goals and making decisions regarding the day-to-day, building-level implementation of the reform model. Depending upon the individual school, these teams have elected to meet on varying schedules. At one elementary school, the team meets for a brief 5-minute meeting each morning, then for a 45-minute session twice each month. At the other elementary schools, the site-based teams meet once each week, generally discussing school functions one week and then discussing school reform-related issues the next. These meetings serve to bring the staff of the schools together in meaningful discussions that can impact school function on a regular basis.

The district leadership team functions to help guide and support the implementation at the district level. This group is composed of representatives from each of the elementary schools, three representatives from the high school, and the administrators from both the elementary and secondary level. The district leadership team meets on the first Wednesday of each month at a local restaurant to discuss implementation at each school and develop activities that serve to

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support implementation.

One of the activities that developed as a result of this group activity is a mini-grant program. Classroom teachers throughout the district are able to develop proposals for special projects that they would like to implement in their classrooms to assist student learning. The district leadership team has the authority to approve grants of up to $500 for individual teachers and larger amounts as determined by the team for groups of teachers. The program has been well received by staff across the district as a way to provide new materials and activities in their classrooms, as well as a way to improve their grant-writing skills.

SERENKA: Time, clear communication, student teams, cross- and intercurricular-teaching teams, and a creative scheduling process that is student- and teacher-friendly have been key supports for reform.

How did you use technology/communications to facilitate reform?

HURLEY: Technology became a way to get students involved with reform. We had classes in Microsoft PowerPoint and Inspiration, as well as computer assistants who helped with minor computer repair. Computer programs helped teachers vary instruction by allowing more time for individual and differentiated instruction. It allowed them to emphasize points of importance and focus instruction to better meet the needs of students. Student- and teacher-made videos using digital stills and a digital movie camera also helped develop an interest in technology.

> "The key component to changing classroom practices is active, diverse, continuous communication."
>
> — ***Pat Whitmire***

We started a student-led, in-school news program that was broadcast school wide each morning. To communicate what was happening in our school to the community, we had television and radio stations talk about school happenings. We sent newsletters to parents and also invited visitors to see firsthand what was happening at our school. All of these technology uses had a positive effect on the public perceptions of the school and our CSR decisions.

WHITMIRE: It is so important to share the good news about our restructuring efforts with our school community. I'm always seeking creative ways to promote what we are doing to change Willow Hill and demonstrate the staff and parents commitment to encouraging progressive change.

A few years ago, I created a weekly staff communication called the "Communication Bulletin." This practical document has become an effective way for me to describe how reform is progressing, offer tips about managing reform, announce upcoming events, explain new procedures, and recognize high-implementing teachers. The "Parent Information Bulletin" is a monthly newsletter that informs parents about our reform efforts and features photos of students and staff engaged in reform activities.

Special family- and community-oriented events such as Community Day are videotaped and informally shown throughout the year. Visitors get a glimpse of school culture while waiting for student recognition assemblies or kindergarten registration. The website is also regularly updated to feature new programs and address parent concerns.

The origin of our community outreach committee lies in videotaped messages from parents, staff, students, and community members. Our new building-site team intends to launch its building plan through a monthly newsletter.

FULLER: An overhaul of our technology plan and implementation has been a major effort in our district over the last four years. We have successfully made the conversion from a Macintosh Apple-based system to a Windows operating environment in all grade levels. This transition from one operating system to another was quite difficult for a number of teachers who had grown accustomed to the Mac environment and had to adjust to a new operating system, as well as a networked environment. As a result of this transition, however, all of our classrooms, K–6, have at least three networked computers that are less than 3 years old and connected to the Internet through the district's wireless system to a T-1 line.

We have also spent a great deal of resources—both time and money—on training teachers on the new computers, as well as a variety of new educational programs that can be used to support instruction and the appropriate use of the Internet. Each teacher has been given a digital camera for classroom use and each building has at least two larger, better quality, digital cameras for building use. We also have several LCD projectors and a smart-board available for teacher use throughout the district.

All of this technology and training provides our teachers with yet another tool to assist and support them in their quest to identify and meet the individual needs of each student. Through the use of a variety of instructional and assessment programs, the teachers are able to work with students at an individual level. Teachers are also able to use management software to track student progress toward individual goals, building goals, and state standards.

SERENKA: All communication became friendlier and the communication with stakeholders increased. We also reworked the school web page to reflect the reform efforts taking place in our school.

Q How did you deal with resisting forces such as the teacher union or the board of education to keep the reform effort moving forward?

HURLEY: We are fortunate. Both our board of education and teachers union have been very supportive of our school reform effort. They are a large part of the success we have had. Both recognize that students are the primary concern. A key decision guide for us has been to ask, "What is best for students?"

GOULD: I have a school support team consisting of grade-level teachers and support personnel. The purpose of the support team is to provide opportunities for teachers to express issues and concerns associated with implementing large-scale reform efforts. The support team meets every three weeks.

WHITMIRE: Resistance is not so much an issue of structured reactions to change but more a realization of the need to understand the dynamics of change. Whenever anything different is proposed, resistance will emerge. What's worked for me is to continually remind myself that reluctant actions are not necessarily vindictive, but a natural way for some individuals to cover their fear of the unknown and to prevent their weaknesses and inadequacies from being publicly exposed. Keeping this in mind, I surrounded myself with risk takers who were willing to work to make change happen, amenable to widely communicating the need for change, and capable of negotiating with resisting forces to make change occur.

Successful Strategies for Facilitating Change

- Make the need for change clear to everyone
- Involve all faculty, staff, and the community
- Create a plan for implementation and review
- Provide time/support for peer coaching
- Offer meaningful professional development
- Encourage faculty and administration interaction
- Be patient and listen

In my district, the union has a strong presence. It rallies to protect those it believes are victimized and violated by the sudden appearance of a different way to get a job done. Facing the situation head-on is the best way to confront the problem and begin to find the correct solution. Although it was difficult and extremely frustrating, I had to listen to the complaints, hear impractical resolutions, and acquiesce some things in order to retain what was important. Support was garnered by publicizing reform-generated student achievements and educating parents, district staff, board members, and neighbors about the needs, methods, and results of positive change.

FULLER: Dealing with the teachers' union was a difficult process for us. Although the CFL model was initially identified and brought to the administration's attention by a group of teachers, and approximately 40 of the district's 55 elementary teachers participated in the development of the CSRD grant proposal, we still had a difficult time implementing the model. After the first cohort of teachers completed their pre-implementation training and began working the model into their classrooms, the association filed a grievance claiming that the implementation of the CFL model constituted a significant change in working conditions and was, therefore, improper. Beyond the change in working conditions, the teachers claimed that the model was selected and implemented without their knowledge and participation. Even members of the group that initially brought the model to the district's attention claimed to not have been involved in the process.

The grievance moved through the appropriate levels, being denied at the building and superintendent's levels. When the process reached the board level, the association agreed to meet with the administration to discuss the implementation before progressing to arbitration. A series of "meet and discuss" sessions were held between the elementary administrators, the association leadership, and the elementary teachers. While we were able to have a great deal of meaningful discussions, no agreement could be reached that would alleviate the need to move into arbitration.

In August 2000, an arbitration hearing was held to determine whether or not the district had the right to implement programs in the schools without negotiating the implementation with the association, and if any recourse was due the association members as a result of the implementation of the model. In November 2000, the arbitrator ruled that it was indeed an "inherent managerial right" to implement programs in the district and that, as long as the training for these programs was done on "district time," there was no need to negotiate terms with the association. The ruling went on to state that because we had agreed to pay teachers for up to 20 hours of time spent outside school time to prepare materials for their classrooms, the district had acknowledged that there was a change in working conditions.

The final ruling required that the district and the association negotiate the impact of the extra time on a teacher's schedule and determine any due compensation, but that the

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parties were not to negotiate the actual implementation of the selected model. These negotiations were handled through the process of negotiating the new teacher's contract. The negotiation team for the board decided to venture outside the ruling of the arbitrator and our contract now contains language that allows teachers to select the components of the model that they wish to implement in their classrooms. Consequently, a large number of teachers have selected not to continue implementation of the model in their classrooms.

SERENKA: If a decision is made within a school to move toward reform, the basis of that action—helping students to increase their achievement—cannot be disputed by boards or unions and be upheld. When reform is set about in the correct way, teachers buy-in because the changes positively affect what they already do in the classroom. Boards are clamoring for increased test scores and can hardly argue with a plan of action to accomplish this end. After a while, all the chatter disappears and what is left is good, hard work on the part of the teaching/learning community and students who are delighted with the climate, tone, and culture of their academic successes.

Q How do you distribute leadership in the change process?

HURLEY: One of the most important ways to facilitate change—once you have established the need—is to make everyone feel a part of the change and have "say so" in the process. This makes it easier for everyone involved to begin the changes necessary for reform.

Teachers were placed in leadership roles to change curriculum, instruction, and the school culture based on their strengths, comfort level, and interests. Meetings were more productive and there was a feeling of "we can do this" that permeated the whole process. Ideas and solutions to problems came easier as a result of a team feeling.

GOULD: Many hands make light work. It is critical to delegate and to help faculty take responsibility for leading the improvement of student learning inside and outside the classroom. Believe in a loose–tight approach to leadership. I am tight about what needs to be done, but loose regarding how people go about achieving the goals. I have been very clear regarding goals and the direction we need to take to improve student learning.

Teachers have helped develop a 5-year action plan that outlines goals, action steps, and indicators of success. Each grade-level team has a leader. The support team consists of the grade-level leaders and helps grade-level colleagues implement our plan. In addition, I have a building-based facilitator who helps me, the support team, and individual teachers implement our 5-year plan. In brief, we all know where we are going and every person in the organization is empowered to find their own pathway and help others discover new pathways to improving student learning.

WHITMIRE: There is no way I can independently invoke change. Staff, district personnel, parents, and the community must be actively engaged and empowered to make decisions. The establishment of the building site team and the community outreach committee afford students, staff, parents, and community members opportunities to be heard and to participate in restructuring our school. Focus groups were formed to address specific problems, generate and implement new ideas, and disseminate information. Focus groups work. The trick is to make sure the members are risk takers committed to exploring new approaches, invested in understanding and communicating the rationale for change, and desirous of collaborating to enact plans. As the leader, it's crucial to know when to speak and what to say. It's vital to portray oneself as self-directed, experienced, knowledgeable, and convinced that the right people have been selected to accomplish the goals.

> "Leadership as a change agent is a systematic framework, welcoming in any who are brave enough and energetic enough to want to effect change. Leadership in any reforming system is a shared leadership whereby the principal is responsible for all that occurs, but the constituents—those who have invested the time, energy, and ideas—are really leading the change."
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> — ***Fran Serenka***

FULLER: We have established building learning/instructional teams at each of our five elementary buildings, as well as the junior-senior high school. This team is responsible for establishing building goals and making decisions regarding the day-to-day, building-level implementation of the reform model. The team is led by a teacher who has been hired to the position of building team leader. This person is responsible for convening the meetings, taking and distributing accurate minutes of the meeting, and representing the school on the district leadership team. Depending upon the individual school, these teams have elected to meet on varying schedules. At one elementary school the team meets for a brief 5-minute meeting each morning, then for a 45-minute session twice each month. At the other elementary schools, the site-based teams meet once each week, generally discussing school functions one week, and then discussing school reform related issues the next. These meetings bring the

staff of the schools together in discussions that can impact school function on a regular basis.

The district leadership team helps guide and support the district-level implementation. This group is composed of the building team leader from each elementary school, three representatives from the high school, and the administrators from both. The district leadership team meets on the first Wednesday of each month at a restaurant to discuss implementation at each school and develop activities that serve to support implementation.

SERENKA: Leadership as a change agent is a systematic framework, welcoming in any who are brave enough and energetic enough to want to effect change. Leadership in any reforming system is a shared leadership whereby the principal is responsible for all that occurs, but the constituents—those who have invested the time, energy, and ideas—are really leading the change.

Q How do you establish a school culture of educators as members of a learning community as a critical element of educational reform?

HURLEY: School culture is established as a result of recognizing a need for change and having a plan to implement change. That plan must address needs at a comfort level acceptable to all and promote the feeling that we can meet this change and be successful in making changes to benefit students and the school community. The school culture is then established by how you work, and under what parameters, to implement the needed changes.

"The more informed and involved stakeholders are, the more trust grows."

— ***Ron Hurley***

GOULD: Some schools have healthy cultures. Others have toxic cultures. The leader must put on the table what she values, draw out from others what they value, and to then express these values in some kind of belief statement. For example, work at the Lowell School is predicated on the following belief: All students can master high-performance learning.

WHITMIRE: I believe that administrative attitudes and actions are influential in proposing, instituting, and facilitating a reform-oriented ethos within the school. Some years ago, I found myself surrounded by a group of very nice people who appeared to have given up their belief that the possibilities for their students were endless. Although a few doubters remain, most staff are genuinely concerned about our children's future, believe they remain an untapped resource of multiple intelligences, and are willing to help release those abilities so our children can soar. This now exists because I listen to their complaints, nurture their fears, establish interdependent and action-oriented cadres of change agents, and support assignment changes for those who were burned-out or needed to experience different student populations. As a result, scores have dramatically improved.

FULLER: The inclusion of all teachers from each elementary school has been very valuable. These teams are responsible for setting student achievement goals and developing projects and programs that will help students, staff, and parents assist students in meeting the stated goals. Teachers are also active members on a support team at each elementary school. The support team is composed of two teacher representatives, four parent representatives, the principal, the counselor, and the CFL facilitator. The teacher and parent representatives each serve 2-year terms. These teams function to provide support to the teachers, students, and parents of the school community in the attainment of goals in both academic and character areas. These two teams provide educators with a great deal of influence in the decision-making process that governs each school and are vital to helping teachers establish a feeling of ownership in the reform process.

SERENKA: The school culture must be ready to reinvent itself once more time for the good of the entire order. The teaching/learning community and those who have been invited from the community must work together to define what total school reform is to look like. A socially responsible, high-achieving citizenry should be the end result, and an implementation plan to get there is key.

Q How do you build trust for support of school reform, especially where it may not have existed in the past?

HURLEY: Trust is built over time. It starts with collecting facts and presenting the reasons for change based on this collection of facts. Every care has to be taken to present the facts to the public honestly and realistically as well as what actions are planned and why and what results are expected. Communication and keeping everyone informed is paramount. Inconsistency and lack of communication promote distrust. The more informed and involved stakeholders are, the more trust grows. This will also allow for changes to the original plans, if necessary, with much less resistance.

GOULD: Given the way initiatives are introduced and abandoned at the drop of a hat, it's difficult for teachers to trust. Predictability builds trust. Setting goals with faculty, clearly stating expectations, holding people accountable, and then

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not shifting mid-course when the newest initiative comes along helps teachers understand that you, as a leader, are focused and will not be detoured or deterred. Being visible, being a good listener, helping teachers solve problems, and sharing data gathered in frequent visits to classrooms help teachers realize that you know what you are talking about. Using data as examples builds credibility, and credibility builds trust.

WHITMIRE: Generating confidence from staff for school restructuring has been a challenge. Even though the Willow Hill faculty were literally screaming for change, when faced with the possibility of change and its accompanying requirements, it was obvious that many were too frightened or sedentary to fully embrace it.

As the building leader, it was necessary for me to be patient and accommodating, but in some instances confrontational, in order to get the change process started. Looking back, I believe my most successful tactic was to inundate staff with an understanding about the dynamics of change.

One June, I had two trusted, action-oriented teachers help identify five very different staff members to collaborate with me to design an original presentation about change. Another time, I addressed frustration about the enormous amount of time required to effectively implement reform. I selected five highly organized (but again, very different) individuals to explain their organizational strategies. The bottom line: Find out what's causing resistance and find ways to get peers involved in resolving the problem. Teachers enjoy learning from colleagues. It makes them relaxed and more confident that a challenge can be overcome.

FULLER: This has been a particularly difficult area for our district to deal with. Although at least 35 of our 50 elementary teachers were involved in the selection of the reform model and the preparation of the CSRD grant proposal, the teachers still felt that the district imposed this reform on them.

We went through a great deal of effort trying to re-establish a feeling of trust between the teachers and the administration, holding numerous formal and informal discussions with teachers at the individual, building, and districtwide levels. While we were able to have a great deal of meaningful discussions about the need for school reform, we were not successful in building a feeling of trust.

Our meetings with staff progressed to the point of an arbitration hearing in August 2000. Although the arbiter's report recognized the district's inherent managerial right to implement a school reform project, when our newest teacher contract was negotiated the teachers were given the opportunity to choose whether or not they would implement the selected reform model. This has become a serious stumbling block in our efforts to build trust with staff and successfully implement the reform model in our schools.

"I believe that parents truly want to be involved in their children's education."
— *Jeffrey Fuller*

SERENKA: Through a review of the data, it will be clear which areas in a school need the most work. Through data, you can prove that there are clear and research-based methods that match the needs of your school. The best way to educate the staff is through compiling the information to make the case, presenting it in a positive light, and finding an implementation plan that is manageable and easy to digest.

Q How do you establish standards-based classrooms/facilitate standards-based instruction? How do you change classroom practices?

HURLEY: Any time you consider change, resistance is likely to follow in some form. Therefore, developing and establishing an atmosphere of doing what is best for students, not what is easy or best for adults, is critical to change in classrooms.

Teaching today is not an easy task. In fact, teaching today is much different than just a few years ago. The establishment of standards and high-stakes testing for accountability changed education. Mandates from state and local school districts are here to stay. Also, the federal government has established national testing criteria. Teaching is hard work. However, if the students' best interests are the greatest concern, then finding ways to improve instruction and classroom learning should be something we all strive for.

Fear of change and trying something new to improve instruction has to be overcome. This is accomplished by recognizing the need to reform, collecting data to identify when reform in needed, developing a plan to implement change, securing the support, and building the trust of those involved. Once these things are accomplished to the highest degree

possible, we must also keep in mind the message from the book by Jim Grant, *If the Horse You Are Riding Dies, Get Off*: if you try something new and it doesn't work, find something that does.

GOULD: Reviewing the standards with teachers, and helping them translate the standards into objectives—through multileveled activities during grade-level, co-planning meetings—helps facilitate standards-based instruction. Reviewing lesson plans, doing walk-throughs in classrooms, and providing feedback on the degree to which they are teaching to standards-based objectives helps teachers realize that you are serious about standards-based classroom practices.

WHITMIRE: The key component to changing classroom practices is active, diverse, continuous communication. My most successful method is having colleagues visit the classrooms of highly implementing, standards-driven colleagues and always allowing time for immediate follow-up dialogue. Publicly praising and rewarding individuals and their students who attempt new strategies motivates other teachers to try different approaches. Using the weekly staff communication to explain or diagram how standards-based classrooms look is also helpful.

One of the best techniques is to have district curriculum supervisors accompany me to observe teachers. Afterward, we chat about what we saw, construct an improvement plan, find out what the teacher thinks will help promote change, and schedule time to revisit. Even the most obstinate teachers enjoy exchanging views with district-level administrators, but the visits also send a clear message that the expert believes enough in the proposed changes to make time to visit those in the trenches and hear their concerns.

FULLER: We have provided our staff with continuous professional education on the alignment of curriculum and instruction with the Pennsylvania State Educational Standards. All district staff dedicated a full year of teaching, to a curriculum-mapping project based on the work of Heidi Hayes-Jacobs. At the end of each week, the staff was required to complete a form that mapped the specific instructional objectives that were taught during the week and the standard to which the objective was aligned.

In addition, as each curricular area was updated as required by our district's strategic plan, the instructional objectives at each level were aligned with state standards. At the completion of a curriculum revision, teachers were required to identify the state standard to which each instructional objective was aligned in their lesson plans or on each student's prescription form. These items are checked for completion and alignment at each observation and periodically throughout the year.

During the last school year, our staff development activities were focused on the area of assessment. Teachers spent numerous hours working on the alignment of classroom assessment tools to their instructional objectives and to state standards. Each grade level spent a good deal of time reviewing the state assessment given at grades 3, 5, 8, and 11. Information from this review of classroom and state assessments, as well as the results of these assessments, was then used to guide instruction in the classroom.

> "Given the way initiatives are introduced and abandoned at the drop of a hat, it's difficult for teachers to trust. Predictability builds trust. Setting goals with faculty, clearly stating expectations, holding people accountable, and then not shifting midcourse when the newest initiative comes along helps teachers understand that you, as a leader, are focused and will not be detoured or deterred. Being visible, being a good listener, helping teachers solve problems, and sharing data gathered in frequent visits to classrooms help teachers realize that you know what you are talking about. Using data as examples builds credibility, and credibility builds trust."
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> — ***Stephen Gould***

SERENKA: Teachers need to work on a curriculum delivery framework, whereby they look at the entire planned course and have the opportunity to identify major themes, the content standards, and the performance standards for each course. By matching this information to what is expected by the state or district and teaching to the major themes and standards, teachers set themselves up for success in standards-based classrooms.

To change classroom practices, teachers need support for new methods of instruction. Realizing that assessment is instruction, and instruction is assessment, makes assessing student achievement easily accomplished through classroom observation and authentic assessment. Pertinent information can then be embedded in the performance tasks and the lesson

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becomes realistic, useful information.

Q How do you address the incongruence between state mandates, state and national standards, and some comprehensive school reform model requirements?

HURLEY: I feel that incongruences between state and federal government mandates must be addressed at a district level. The leadership role that must be assumed by the district is to present a clear picture of expectations from the state and national levels.

Another way to address incongruences is to select a reform model that best fits applicable state, federal, and district mandates.

GOULD: Most of the CSR models ask educators to address assessment, instruction, and curriculum. The standards define what students need to know and be able to do. It is up to schools to determine how to use the pathways the models provide to address the standards. Mandated state testing, although usually aligned to the standards, may not be aligned with local curricula. It is up to the local school community to determine if they teach to the standards or teach to the test. I favor teaching to the standards rather than second-guessing the test makers.

Building Trust for Support of School Reform

- Communicate and keep everyone informed
- Set goals with the faculty
- Be visible and be a good listener
- Make use of your data to solve problems
- Allow teachers to coach one another
- Create a plan that is manageable

WHITMIRE: In Abington, any issues of incongruence are handled by central office administrators. Because we are a progressive, proactive district, the superintendent and his designee made certain that our selected reform model met both standards of the federal and state government.

FULLER: We felt that it was more important to be in alignment with state mandates and standards than it was to meet the needs of our chosen reform model. Therefore, if there was incongruence between state mandates and our reform model, we made adjustments to our implementation of the reform model to meet the needs of the state and the district. These adjustments were always made with the assistance and support of our reform provider, and because our reform model was developed and supported in Pennsylvania, this support was readily available and easily provided.

SERENKA: It is important that a CSR model works within the national, state, and district constructs. There is no quick fix for any school. Reform involves an evolution to total performance. Reform models must be elastic enough to assist each school in becoming a high-achieving entity.

Q How do you address the achievement gaps between ethnic groups? Between gender groups? Between special education students and regular education students?

HURLEY: This is a very complicated question with no easy answer. The process of collecting data and input from students, parents, teachers, and administrators is an absolute necessity, as well as disaggregating data from all sources (state achievement tests, school tests, and teachers' input) and identifying the reasons why there is an achievement gap and formulating a plan to close the gap.

GOULD: Arranging classroom space, helping students take responsibility for their learning and behavior, co-planning with support personnel, and differentiating instruction helps diminish achievement gaps between regular education students and those traditionally underserved. Engaging the parents in the agenda of the school by inviting them into classrooms, having "curriculum nights," and showing them how they can help their children at home are also very important.

WHITMIRE: At Willow Hill, differences in performance are not extremely gender or racially stratified. The majority of students are of African descent, and many of those students earn honors and are advanced or proficient in standardized tests. For example, this year, five of our school teams earned high-achievement plaques, certificates, or merits for outstanding achievement in the international Elementary Math Olympiad competition. Team members were of African, Asian, Hispanic, and European descent. In fact, the number of girls recognized for high achievement exceeded the number of boys. Boys and girls of African descent were top scorers in the 2000 and 2001 state assessment.

My recipe for success calls for teachers to consistently set high standards and hold every child accountable for academic achievement. It is the school's and district's job.

FULLER: Our largest gaps occur between regular education students and special education/Title I students. The latter groups of students continue to score significantly lower on standardized assessments than their regular education peers. To address this problem, we have implemented a

number of research-based instructional methods and provided extensive training to our Title I reading specialists and our special education teachers. Specific programs that we have implemented include guided reading, Project Read, Early Success, Soar to Success, and the Wilson Reading program. Teachers are implementing these programs based on the specific needs and levels of the children they are teaching.

SERENKA: Celebrating student strengths and supporting weaknesses creates an engaged learner in any case. An engaged learner is a successful learner. School districts need to be able to commit resources for this type of support. Title I, peer tutors, and community mentors and volunteers are examples of these resources, as well as examples of time and money allocated for support.

Q How do you include special education in the school's total reform program? What is the role of benchmarking and red-flagging in implementing school reform? How do you get teachers to use student achievement and other student and school data to structure instruction? How do you infuse data-driven decision-making in whole school reform?

HURLEY: One of the most integral parts of total school reform is to involve the whole school. It can be a dividing force if one faction in the school is perceived as not being part of the effort to reform, and thereby not having to do all things other faculty members are involved in. Special education must be involved in a way that ensures that the interests of special education students are being met and the delivery of instruction by special education teachers fits with the identified needs/goals of the school reform effort.

Benchmarking and red-flagging are also integral to school reform. Benchmarking provides an example of what level you are trying to reach. It provides a model for students and teachers to use as a guide. Red-flagging identifies areas that need attention to meet reform goals. Only by looking at student achievement data and assessment information can we know what is working.

GOULD: We have worked hard to coordinate regular education and special education services. Margaret Wang wrote eloquently regarding eliminating the "second system," and I am committed to doing so. Grade-level teams of regular educators and special education teachers meet weekly to co-plan lessons with proactive accommodations for students who learn at different rates and/or need extra opportunities to practice. At Lowell, all support personnel are referred to as co-teachers. This has integrated special education teachers in the regular classrooms and has also helped both students and teachers see them as teachers for all students.

WHITMIRE: The CFL model envelops the instructional strategies most effectively used by special educators. At Willow Hill, special educators participate in collaborative meetings and are actively involved in community outreach and student life programs.

It is the school's responsibility to ensure that parents understand what is expected from their children and facilitate their efforts to follow through at home. Getting teachers to want to raise expectations and parents to support high standards is the toughest part of my job. It emphasizes the significance of correctly using data to determine how to select the most effective instructional strategies and assess student performance. Teachers regularly participate in special professional education to help develop those skills. The math curriculum requires an item analysis after each unit test. We purchased pretests that are given to students before each reading theme. Flexible groups are formed to pinpoint specific needs by providing remediation, reinforcement, or enrichment. Data from standardized tests is used to guide instructional experiences for students who are not proficient.

FULLER: All teachers are expected to implement the CFL model in their classroom, regardless of whether they are identified as a regular education teacher or a special education teacher. Because the model began as a special education inclusion model and it focuses on meeting the specific needs of individual students through a diagnostic-prescriptive, instructional process, the implementation of the model in special education classrooms was relatively easy.

Through the process of developing our CSRD proposal, we established benchmarks for student achievement based on increases in our students' scores on the Pennsylvania State System of Assessment (PSSA) tests. Each year the data from the PSSA is reviewed in relation to our established benchmark scores. This information is then used to determine necessary adjustments to classroom instruction.

Teachers have received extensive training in how to use assessment data from both standardized and classroom assessments to drive the instruction in their classrooms. Teachers meet in grade- and building-level groups to review the data and identify the specific instructional needs of individual students. Using this information, they are better able to meet the needs of all students, whether they are regular education, special education, or gifted programs.

SERENKA: Learning experiences in the entire school should reflect the trust, goals, and ideals of the reform movement. Special education is fertile ground for standards-based reform and instruction. It is a diagnostic and prescriptive approach to education that should be a hallmark of all reforming schools. Special education has within its very constructs the aspects of good reform and best practice. The support

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and individualized educational opportunities offered through special education is what regular education should strive for.

Red-flagging and benchmarking are ways of identifying which areas of reform need to be enhanced to offer students a better academic environment. By using all types of data, school communities can identify which areas need more support and which areas should be a celebration of strength. The data will point clearly to areas that need attention and resources. Continuously defining and refining weaknesses and strengths allows the teaching/learning community to have a point of departure, a path to follow, and an achievable goal. All decisions should be made with regard to the data. A school is the sum of all its data, as well as its views, culture, and community.

Q What role(s) must teachers play in whole school reform?

HURLEY: The role of teachers in school reform is key to the success of reform efforts. Teachers are on the front line of reform. Knowing what is working, what needs fine-tuning, and what needs to be scrapped is absolutely key to the success of the reform effort. The enthusiasm and efforts of teachers will make or break the reform effort. If teachers recognize the need for reform, dedicate themselves to making it happen, and project the belief that it will happen, the chance for a successful reform effort improves greatly.

"Reform models must be elastic enough to assist each school in becoming a high-achieving entity."
— ***Fran Serenka***

GOULD: Teachers must determine schoolwide priorities and an instructional focus based on the needs of the students. By gathering data and reflecting on it, teachers (in concert with the principal) determine learning problems that are affecting a significant number of students and establish priorities, action steps, and time lines to improve the learning of all students.

WHITMIRE: Without teacher commitment and involvement, there is no reform. Principals may generate the need for reform. Central office administrators may recommend board approval. But teachers are the core of any changes. After all, they are responsible for promoting, delivering, and supporting the new instruction. Their attitude and confidence affects the way this new instruction is delivered and how students embrace the changes. I keep this in mind, as I continuously ponder how to motivate teachers to want to learn more about the need to restructure and manage unforeseen changes. As I create opportunities for them to become more comfortable with the multiple tasks and changes that school reform demands, I better realize that their support will make or break any efforts toward change.

FULLER: Teachers must be actively involved in all stages of school reform, from the initial step of determining that reform is needed, to the selection of the reform model, to the training and classroom implementation of the selected model. They must take a leadership role in the development of support for reform from the teaching staff, the parents, and other members of the school community.

However, this involvement does not guarantee the success of school reform. In our case, a group of teachers brought the CFL model to our attention, teachers were actively involved in the development of the CSRD grant proposals over the course of the 1998–1999 school year, all teachers were trained in the implementation of the model, and teachers were involved in presentations to inform the community about the model. They were also involved in the filing of the grievance that led to the arbitration hearing, at which teachers testified both for and against the implementation of the reform model.

I believe the most important factor in keeping the teachers positively involved in the process is to ensure that there is constant communication and feedback between the teachers and the administration. This flow of information will help to eliminate the feeling that reform is being "done to" the teachers. It will help to support the feeling that reform is being "done with" the teachers and help them to feel that they do have a voice in the decisions that affect their daily working lives and the operation of their school. If the teachers feel that they have had input into the decision-making process and can understand the process that is taking place through the reform project, they will be willing to work and support the program, ensuring its success.

SERENKA: Teachers who use good instructional techniques, use data to make decisions, and tie learning into authentic assessment are the cornerstone of successful reform. Teachers become the directors of school reform by creating an environment in which students are self-directed and engaged

in their learning. Reforming a school means creating a school that allows students to achieve their maximum academic potential through creative and research-based instructional methodologies. CSR grants recognize the importance of teachers in the school reform in that the narrative requires that support from the teaching staff be evident or the grant will not be awarded.

Q What should the community's involvement be in school reform? How did you get acceptance of change and involvement of the community, as a reform partner and a reform supporter, in your school reform effort?

HURLEY: Community involvement is extremely important to school reform. The support provided by a community that has accepted change is invaluable. There are several benefits to community involvement. One benefit is that volunteers come into the building to assist teachers in any way possible to help facilitate school reform. Another benefit is that involved community members can help proliferate information to others to help gain acceptance for reform.

There are a variety of ways to gain acceptance. School newsletters can help parents become informed. School personnel should encourage visits to the school through the use of assemblies and special parent visitation days.

Visits to business luncheons and community functions as well as civic clubs are all places to "spread the word" about your school reform efforts and the plans to implement that reform. The main idea is to get community support and involvement by making the reasons and plans for reform known to all.

> "The role of teachers in school reform is key to the success of reform efforts. Teachers are on the front line of reform. Knowing what is working, what needs fine-tuning, and what needs to be scrapped is absolutely key to the success of the reform effort. The enthusiasm and efforts of teachers will make or break the reform effort. If teachers recognize the need for reform, dedicate themselves to making it happen, and project the belief that it will happen, the chance for a successful reform effort improves greatly."
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> — ***Ron Hurley***

GOULD: The school community needs to understand the nature of learning problems that are affecting a significant number of students. They may help provide input to teachers and the principal regarding ways the school might address the identified problems. For example, they may suggest ways the school could help them help students with homework or provide input regarding the kinds of instructional approaches (constructivism, integrated curriculum, etc.) they would like to see used at the school.

WHITMIRE: This is the fun part. In a small community like Willow Grove, there are families who have been associated with the school and the district for many years. I've found diverse attitudes towards the school and the district. There are hostile families who believe the district is historically inequitable, teachers are remote or inflexible, and principals just want to maintain the status quo. Others have success stories but feel this is because they've segregated their children from those who are unprogressive, demanded that teachers provide quality experiences, or have used external sources to ensure their children's achievement.

My approach is to invite parents and community members into the building on a regular basis to see what we are doing and how it's being done. For example, one winter evening, our outreach committee held a potluck supper/question and answer session. Community members were able to meet teachers and complete a simple survey about the school. Staff volunteers supervised children in the gym. During American Education Week, the community was invited into the school to observe exhibits of student work, view a video of school activities, see displays of curriculum material, and visit classrooms to see how children are taught. I attended a meeting of a local community group to explain restructuring and to share ways individuals who no longer have students in the building but had some free time could make contributions to our success. I believe this type of community involvement leads to a different perception of school leadership. What occurs in school is no longer a secret. Teachers are viewed as real people who are sensitive to neighborhood children and work to meet their needs.

FULLER: The community should always be kept abreast of what is going on in their schools, but especially when planning significant changes school operation or instruction. I believe that parents want to be involved in their children's education. Most of the time, they do not know what the schools need from them or are scared to become involved. It is incumbent upon the teachers and administration to keep the community informed and involved in the reform process and to work to build support and enthusiasm for the changes to the schools in the community.

Our district built community support by holding informa-

— *continued*

tional meetings for the parents at each of the schools. The parents had the opportunity to hear an overview of the reform model and see how the implementation would work in a classroom. They were able to ask questions of the administration, the teachers, and the model provider. We also invited the local newspaper to visit our teachers during their implementation training and to visit the schools. Several resulting stories helped build support for reform and a better understanding of the model for the parents and community.

Parents are also invited to serve on leadership teams. The support team at each building is made up of parent, teacher, and administrative representatives and establishes and supports instructional and character goals for students, staff, and parents. This process gives teachers and parents a say in the issues that are facing their schools, leading to their more active involvment.

SERENKA: The community should be involved in the school reform starting from the initial needs assessment. The community at large can define what is needed in its citizenry and what is expected from its young people. All communities want to be able to boast that the education system has thwarted youth law enforcement issues. With a concerted effort from the community, conversations can take place in schools to support reform and funnel its by-products into the community.

It is important to invite the community into the school. It is also important to get out into the community with programs and with "person power" to be able to assess the perspectives of the communities served by the school. Woodland Hills West services five small towns. Each town must know the hallmarks and goals of the school and how to help. Community leaders often visit, and there is strong involvement from police, fire, and business leaders. Community after-school programs and tutorial centers are important in carrying the schools' message. If you put good educational reasoning behind your message, as well as a "good for kids" bent, change is not that difficult.

"The community should be involved in the school reform starting from the initial needs assessment. It is the community at large that can define what is needed in its citizenry and what is expected from its young people. All communities want to be able to boast that the education system has thwarted youth violence and law enforcement issues. With a concerted effort from all aspects of the community, conversations can take place within schools to support reform and funnel its by-products out into the community."

— ***Fran Serenka***

How did you keep your school community abreast of and supportive of ongoing school reform efforts after gaining their initial acceptance of the need for school change?

HURLEY: Awareness can be maintained through a variety of ways. Newsletters and special school programs can be used to invite parents to school. Other ways include acquiring public service announcements on radio and television and getting television coverage of special events. Establishing a school web site is also a very effective.

Begin a volunteer program for parents and community members. Form a partnership with various members of the business community to help with funding for financing of publicity. Our chamber of commerce started and assisted with this program. Some businesses will help financially in exchange for use of school resources (gym, computer lab, etc.). The key is to assess the community's make-up and select the most effective way to keep the community informed about reform efforts.

GOULD: I send a newsletter home every other week, have "coffees with the principal," have monthly grade-level "open houses" where parents visit classrooms, and use an automated phone system to contact the school community regarding school events.

WHITMIRE: People will support what is occurring if they know why change is necessary, understand the strategies for instituting change, see positive results, and feel a part of the change process. Accomplishing this is time-consuming, yet relatively simple. My formula is to keep neighbors and influential community members involved and informed. Remember to invite them to student recognition assemblies, athletic competitions, open houses, and curriculum events. Send community newsletters and state-of-the-school assessment surveys. Use collaboration times to invite community members to dialogue with staff about their restructuring experiences. And above all, always ask their opinions and solicit their assistance. When the school communicates the community's integral involvement, the community will favorably respond.

FULLER: Parents and community members are always invited and encouraged to remain involved in their children's school. We continue to hold parent literacy nights, providing parents with an overview of the CFL model and focused skills that they can immediately use with their students. Parents and community members are also involved in leadership teams at both the building and district level. Each of our

schools has a support team in place that works to establish and support goals for the school community.

SERENKA: Constant dialogue in terms of newsletters, notes that were sent home, remarks on report cards, and roundtable discussions are critical to getting the message out and allowing for feedback and adjustments. Good communication is one of the hallmarks of any successfully reforming school.

Q How do you celebrate success? When do you celebrate success? How do you sustain change after achieving target goals?

HURLEY: Success can be celebrated in any way that serves to motivate those involved. Some ways include special field trips, recognition assemblies to support special efforts, ads in newspapers, or public service announcements on television and radio.

To sustain change after reaching target goals you must re-evaluate circumstances, assess needs, and set new goals. Education is constantly changing. We must be ready to make the necessary changes to education and instructional practices to best meet the educational needs of students, maintaining an effective and meaningful place in preparing students to assume their role in society.

GOULD: At the beginning of school each year, we have an assembly that begins with a processional; the fifth graders carry in banners which proclaim: "We have a commitment to people—WE CARE; a commitment to partnership—WE SHARE; a commitment to excellence—WE DARE." At the end of the year, the fifth graders pass the banners to the fourth graders and we talk about the importance of passing on the traditions that make our school a great place to learn. Every two weeks throughout the school year, I hold a school assembly in which students, teachers, and parents are recognized for their contribution to achieving goals of the school.

FULLER: It is important for everyone associated with a school to realize that it is alright to have fun in school. When this is a shared belief, it becomes acceptable to celebrate every success. These celebrations help to develop a sense of belonging in the school community, leading to even greater support for programs, teachers, and students.

SERENKA: Celebrating success should be a key to all activity. Celebrating with kind words, encouragement, small tokens of appreciation, notes, announcements, and general good will are all ways to celebrate. These ways are inexpensive and allow members of the teaching/learning community to know that goodness comes from good effort and jobs well-done. Larger celebrations (e.g., ice cream socials after test taking) can be funded by donations and should be used for whole team/grade activities so that all students have the opportunity to celebrate. Celebrating success should happen as a matter of course and should be an invested attitude of all school staff.

Sustaining change and embedded good work in the normal functioning of the school is the goal of reform. Reform must be sustained over time by adjusting the various constructs that lend to success. It takes about three years before all members of the teaching/learning community can feel comfortable with the process. When data-driven decision making, a commitment to student engagement, and a desire for ongoing, self-examination are present, reform will be the elastic model of a high-achieving institution.

FACILITATING STANDARDS-BASED INSTRUCTION

- Review the standards with teachers.
- Review lesson plans and help teachers translate standards into objectives with multileveled activities.
- Conduct routine classroom walkthroughs.
- Provide active, diverse, and continuous feedback to teachers on their instruction.
- Have teachers visit classrooms of highly implementing, standards-driven colleagues and allow time for immediate followup dialogue.
- Collaborate with district curriculum supervisors to construct improvement plans.

Patricia Felton-Montgomery and *Frederick McCoy, LSS* Research Associates, contributed to the development of this issue of *LSS Field Notes*.

LSS Editorial Staff
Marilyn Murphy, Director of Outreach and Dissemination
Stephen Page, Managing Editor
Lou Iovino, Design Editor

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LSS
The Laboratory for Student Success
The Mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Laboratory
at Temple University
1301 Cecil B. Moore Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19122-6091

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